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ACTION: NONE INFO: CRL, DONOVA, NCECF, NCPM, ODPD-D, ODPN-N,
ODPS-S, ODPW-W, OGI/FSI/PI, OGITNATAB2, OPCTR/EALA, PRINT, RF,
SOV/RIG/DC, SOV/SP/W/M, SOV/SP/W/N, SOV/TW/RPL, TTC/CS, FILE, ODO-3,
LA/CATFH, LA/CATFR-3, LA/NOG-5, LA/SANDG, ALA/MC/E1, ALA/MC/HO-2,
ALA/MC/M2, ALA/MC/N-2, ALA/MC/PME-2, ALA/MC/RAE, ALA/PO/LA, CI/SA,
D/FBIS-2, EPO/LA, EPS/IG, ICS/HC/LA, NCREG-5, NIO/DL/AL, NSD/SSB, OCA-3,
OGI/GD/AWH, PCS/PGG, PPS/ALBC, PPS/ENB8, PPS/ICB, PPS/PR-2, PPS/RB,
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Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir.

☒ Release () Excise () Deny ☒ Declassify
Date 2/22/02 Exemption 1

EXDIS CONTRA FOR AMBASSADOR OR CHARGE FROM ABRAMS

E.O. 12356: (DECL: OADR)
TAGS: HO, NU, PINR, PINS
SUBJECT: RESISTANCE LEADERSHIP

DECAPTIONED

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1612, MANAGUA 0830

1. ~~SECRET~~ - ENTIRE TEXT

2. REFTELS WERE TIMELY, EXTENSIVE AND FIRST RATE. THANK YOU.

3. THE ALMOST-FINAL VERSION OF MY LETTER FOLLOWS BELOW. I WOULD LIKE YOU TO EXAMINE IT CAREFULLY AND PROVIDE ANY FURTHER COMMENTS BY COB THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13. AS YOU WILL READILY NOTE, WE HAVE MOVED TO PUT THE ISSUE MORE ON OUR TERMS THAN THOSE OF OUR CRITICS.

4. BEGIN TEXT

DEAR SENATOR LUGAR:

5. YOU ASKED ABOUT THE ALLEGATION THAT THE NICARAGUAN RESISTANCE CONSISTS OF, OR IS LED BY, SUPPORTERS OF THE LATE DICTATOR ANASTASIO SOMOZA. WE HAVE REVIEWED THE FACTS CAREFULLY AND CONCLUDE THAT THIS ALLEGATION IS

INCORRECT AND MISLEADING.

6. THE LEADERS OF THE MAIN RESISTANCE ORGANIZATION, THE UNITED NICARAGUAN OPPOSITION (UNO), ARE ADOLFO CALERO, ARTURO CRUZ AND ALFONSO ROBELO. ALL THREE OPPOSED SOMOZA WHEN SOMOZA WAS STILL IN POWER. CALERO WAS JAILED BY SOMOZA; CRUZ AND ROBELO LATER BECAME JUNTA MEMBERS WITH THE SANDINISTAS. WE HOPE THAT UNO WILL CONTINUE TO BROADEN THE MEMBERSHIP OF ITS COALITION, BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF NICARAGUA, BUT WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO DOUBT THAT UNO'S LEADERS AND OBJECTIVES ARE ALREADY MORE DEMOCRATIC THAN THOSE OF EITHER SOMOZA OR THE SANDINISTAS.

7. THE ACTUAL FIGHTERS OF THE RESISTANCE ARE OVERWHELMINGLY RURAL YOUTHS LOYAL TO THEIR FAMILIES AND

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LOCALITIES AND DRIVEN TO REBELLION BY SANDINISTA ATTACKS ON RELIGION AND INDEPENDENT FARMING. NOW MOSTLY 18-22 YEARS OLD, THEY WERE IN THEIR EARLY TEENS WHEN SOMOZA FELL IN 1979. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THEY ARE FIGHTING FOR SELF-DETERMINATION AGAINST DICTATORSHIP AND FOREIGN IMPOSITION, AND BELIEVE THAT IT IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES THAT THESE PEASANT FIGHTERS RECEIVE THE MILITARY TRAINING AND WEAPONS THEY NEED TO RESIST THE SOVIET-ARMED AND CUBAN-TRAINED SANDINISTA ARMY.

8. THE FIGHTING FORCES OF THE RESISTANCE BELONG TO THREE MAJOR GROUPINGS. THE LARGEST AND MILITARILY MOST EFFECTIVE BELONG TO THE NICARAGUAN DEMOCRATIC FORCE (FDN) HEADED BY CALERO SINCE 1983. OTHER IMPORTANT RESISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDE ARDE, BUILT BY ROBELO AND FORMER SANDINISTA COMANDANTE EDEN PASTORA, AND MISURA, KISAN AND OTHER GROUPS ACTIVE AMONG THE MISKITO INDIANS.

9. THE MILITARY COMMANDERS OF THESE RESISTANCE ARMIES COME FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, BUT MOST COME FROM THE VERY GROUPS THE SANDINISTAS CLAIM TO REPRESENT: NICARAGUAN PEASANTS, SMALL FARMERS, URBAN PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS, OPPONENTS OF SOMOZA, EVEN FORMER SANDINISTA FIGHTERS. THE COMMANDERS DIFFER FROM THEIR TROOPS IN BEING OLDER (MOST ARE 25-35) AND IN THAT ALMOST HALF COME FROM URBAN RATHER THAN RURAL BACKGROUNDS.

10. LESS THAN HALF OF THE RESISTANCE COMMANDERS HAVE PRIOR MILITARY EXPERIENCE. THOSE WHO DO HAVE MILITARY SKILLS ACQUIRED THEM IN MORE OR LESS EQUAL NUMBERS IN THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY NATIONAL GUARD AND IN THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY SANDINISTA ARMY. THIS IS THE FDN

MILITARY, WHICH ORIGINALLY ASSIMILATED FORCES BUILT LARGELY BY FORMER GUARDSMEN. THE COMMANDERS ARE NOW FOR THE MOST PART NICARAGUANS WHOSE MILITARY EXPERIENCE IS LINKED TO THE FSLN, NOT SOMOZA.

11. WHILE ACCEPTING THAT THE NICARAGUAN DEMOCRATIC FORCE (FDN) HAS A PEASANT ARMY, A REPORT PREPARED LAST YEAR FOR THE ARMS CONTROL AND FOREIGN POLICY CAUCUS (WHO ARE THE CONTRAS?, APRIL 18, 1985) CLAIMED THAT THE FDN "ARMY IS ORGANIZED AND COMMANDED BY FORMER NATIONAL GUARDSMEN." THIS ALLEGATION HAS BECOME ALMOST AN ARTICLE OF FAITH FOR MANY WHO OPPOSE U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE NICARAGUAN RESISTANCE. IT IS NOT SUPPORTED BY THE FACTS.

12. THE CAUCUS STAFF CLAIMED THAT "46 OF THE 48 POSITIONS IN THE FDN MILITARY LEADERSHIP ARE HELD BY EX-NATIONAL GUARDSMEN." GUARDSMEN WERE SAID TO HOLD "ALL BUT ONE OF THE 12 TOP CENTRAL STAFF," INCLUDING THE STRATEGIC COMMANDER, "FIVE OUT OF SIX REGIONAL COMMANDERS, AND ALL 30 TASK FORCE COMMANDERS."

13. THE CAUCUS STAFF IS CORRECT IN IDENTIFYING THE FDN'S MILITARY CHIEF AS A FORMER GUARDSMAN. IT IS ALSO ON THE MARK IN DESCRIBING THE FDN'S REGIONAL AND TASK FORCE COMMANDERS AS "THE KEY MILITARY FIELD LEADERS." BUT THEN MISREPRESENTATION RAPIDLY TAKES OVER. THE REPORT'S EXTRAORDINARY MATHEMATICAL PRECISION WAS DOCUMENTED AT A CRITICAL POINT WITH THE SENTENCE "OUR SOURCES CLAIM THAT MOST AND PROBABLY ALL OF THE 30 TASK FORCE COMMANDERS ARE FORMER GUARDS." ONLY THREE SOURCES WERE NAMED. ONE IS AN ACADEMIC EXPERT WHO DENIES HE DISCUSSED THE TASK FORCE COMMANDERS WITH THE AUTHORS OF THE REPORT. THE OTHER TWO SOURCES BROKE WITH THE FDN AFTER SERVING IN NON-MILITARY POSITIONS.

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14. OUR LATEST INFORMATION IS THAT THE FDN HAS 52 TASK FORCES OR EQUIVALENT COMMANDS (TASK FORCES RANGE IN SIZE FROM 60 TO 700 MEMBERS). WE OBTAINED DATA ON 47 OF THE COMMANDERS (NO BACKGROUND INFORMATION WAS AVAILABLE FOR FOUR COMMANDERS AND ONE COMMAND WAS VACANT). THEIR PREVIOUS OCCUPATIONS WERE: 21 PEASANTS OR SMALL FARMERS; 13 GUARD (3 OFFICERS AND 10 ENLISTED); 12 SANDINISTAS (3 OFFICERS AND 9 ENLISTED), AND ONE STUDENT.

15. IN SHORT, ONE QUARTER (13) OF THE TASK FORCE COMMANDERS HAD PRIOR GUARD SERVICE; BUT ALMOST THREE QUARTERS (35) HAD NEVER SERVED IN THE GUARD IN ANY CAPACITY.

16. THE FDN HAS 14 REGIONAL COMMANDS (EACH HAD 2 TO 4 TASK FORCES TOTTALLING ROUGHLY 800 COMBATANTS). THE 14 REGIONAL COMMANDERS INCLUDED 6 SANDINISTA ENLISTED MEN, 2 PEASANTS OR SMALL FARMERS, 2 GUARD ENLISTED MEN, 1 GUARD LIEUTENANT, 1 CIVILIAN MEDICAL DOCTOR, 1 EVANGELICAL PASTOR, AND 1 STUDENT. RATHER THAN 5 OF 6 REGIONAL COMMANDERS BEING FORMER GUARD MEMBERS AS ASSERTED IN THE CAUCUS REPORT, WE FOUND 3 OF 14.

17. AS CONCERNS THE HEADQUARTERS, THE CAUCUS COUNT OF 11 FORMER GUARDSMEN OUT OF THE 12 TOP POSITIONS ARBITRARILY COUNTED SOME SPECIALIZED SUPPORT SERVICES (AIR, COUNTERINTELLIGENCE, PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE, TRAINING, MISURA LIAISON) BUT NOT OTHERS (NAVY, MEDICAL, LEGAL, FINANCE, LOGISTICS AND COMMUNICATIONS). THE RESULT WAS TO EXCLUDE PERSONS WHO WERE NOT FORMER GUARDSMEN. OUR INFORMATION IS THAT, COUNTING ALL OPERATIONAL COMMANDERS, ALL CHIEFS OF SUPPORT SERVICES, AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC AND THE CIVIL-MILITARY COMMANDS YIELDS A TOTAL OF 12 FORMER GUARDSMEN (INCLUDING BERMUDEZ) OUT OF 21 PERSONS. THIS IS A SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER PROPORTION THAN FOR THE FIELD COMMANDERS, BUT HARDLY A DECISIVE OR CONTROLLING FORCE. CONSIDERING THAT THE HEADQUARTERS MUST PROVIDE THE PROFESSIONAL MILITARY CONTENT BETWEEN THE OFTEN STRONG-WILLED AND INDEPENDENT FIELD COMMANDERS WHO CONTROL THE TROOPS AND THE STRATEGY OF THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP.

18. AS NOTED ABOVE, IT IS TRUE THAT ENRIQUE BERMUDEZ, THE FDN'S MILITARY COMMANDER, WAS A COLONEL IN THE NATIONAL GUARD. BUT IT IS WRONG TO CALL HIM A BACKER OF SOMOZA. SOMOZA HAD HIM POSTED OUT OF NICARAGUA DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS OF HIS REGIME. NOT EVEN THE SANDINISTAS ACCUSED BERMUDEZ OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES UNDER SOMOZA. IN 1979, SOMOZA REJECTED A CARTER ADMINISTRATION SUGGESTIONS THAT BERMUDEZ ASSUME COMMAND OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AFTER HIS DEPARTURE. UNLESS ONE IS SEEKING TO DENY TO THE RESISTANCE THE SERVICES OF ALL FORMER GUARDSMEN AT A TIME WHEN THE SANDINISTAS THEMSELVES ARE USING FORMER GUARDSMEN AND MANY FOREIGNERS TO BUILD THE BIGGEST MILITARY ORGANIZATION IN THE HISTORY OF CENTRAL AMERICA, IT IS HARD TO FIND THIS RECORD OBJECTIONABLE.

19. ANALYZING AN ISSUE ON ONE PARTICULAR SET OF TERMS CAN BE MISLEADING. IN THIS CASE, THE FOCUS ON IDENTIFYING FORMER GUARDSMEN IN THE RESISTANCE SHIFTS ATTENTION FROM TWO CRITICAL POINTS.

20. THE FIRST IS THE NATURE OF THE MILITARY FORCES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF NICARAGUA. THE SANDINISTA ARMED FORCES ARE SIX TO TEN TIMES LARGER THAN THOSE OF SOMOZA. AND THEY ARE TRAINED AND SOMETIMES OPERATIONALLY SUPPORTED IN COMBAT BY FOREIGNERS. WHEN DANIEL ORTEGA ON FEBRUARY 5,

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SPOKE IN HAVANA TO THE CONGRESS OF THE CUBAN COMMUNIST PARTY OF "THE BLOOD OF CUBAN INTERNATIONALISTS FALLEN ON NICARAGUAN GROUND." HE WAS TALKING ABOUT CUBANS KILLED FIGHTING NICARAGUANS.

21. THE SECOND CRITICAL POINT IS THE STORY TOLD BY THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE RESISTANCE COMMANDERS. INDIVIDUAL FDN REGIONAL COMMANDS ARE FREQUENTLY LED BY MEN OF COMMON BACKGROUND (A FREQUENT PATTERN IS ALL PEASANTS AND SMALL FARMERS FROM A PARTICULAR AREA). FOUR OF THE REGIONAL COMMANDS, HOWEVER, HAVE A MIX OF FORMER GUARD AND FORMER SANDINISTA MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THEIR COMMAND STRUCTURE. IN THREE OF THE FOUR, FORMER SANDINISTA MILITARY PERSONNEL OUTRANK (AND HENCE GIVE ORDERS TO) FORMER GUARDSMEN.

22. THE CONCLUSION IS INESCAPABLE: RESISTANCE TO SANDINISTA ABUSES IS SUBMERGING DIFFERENCES AND FORGING A NEW NATIONAL COALITION SIMILAR TO THE ONE THAT ROSE UP AGAINST SOMOZA. THE DECISION LAST MONTH OF FIVE SOUTHERN FRONT ARDE COMMANDERS (ASSOCIATED WITH EDEN PASTORA) TO COORDINATE THEIR MILITARY OPERATIONS WITH UNO IS ANOTHER GOOD EXAMPLE.

23. MORE MUST BE DONE TO STRENGTHEN LINKAGES BETWEEN THE EXTERNAL RESISTANCE AND THE INTERNAL OPPOSITION. MORE MUST BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE OF THE RESISTANCE FORCES (UNO HAS ONLY RECENTLY BEGUN A HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING PROGRAM). BUT TO CONTINUE TO ASSOCIATE RESISTANCE FORCES WITH SOMOZA IS PATENTLY MISLEADING.

24. IT IS NOT JUST THAT SOMOZA IS DEAD. OR THAT THE CENTRAL AMERICAN DICTATORSHIPS ASSOCIATED WITH SOMOZA HAVE ALL GIVEN WAY TO ELECTED GOVERNMENTS COMMITTED TO DEMOCRACY. OR EVEN THAT THE ONLY CENTRAL AMERICAN WHO WEARS A MILITARY UNIFORM IS THE SANDINISTA PRESIDENT OF NICARAGUA. IT IS THAT AS OF TODAY, THE ARMED RESISTANCE IS ALREADY MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE THAN IS THE SANDINISTA REGIME.

END TEXT WHITEHEAD

END OF MESSAGE

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